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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Seventieth year

Identical letters dated 12 February 2015 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

I regret to inform that conditions in the Occupied State of Palestine, including East Jerusalem, are worsening as Israel, the occupying Power, continues its illegal and provocative practices, especially in connection with its settlement activities and collective punishment of the Palestinian people.

In grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention, notably articles 49 and 33, Israel persists with its colonization of the Palestinian land, the confiscation and destruction of Palestinian property and the forced displacement of Palestinian civilians. The occupying Power persists with gross collective punishment and reprisal against the entire Palestinian civilian population in the Gaza Strip, foremost by way of its inhumane blockade. The cumulative effect is one of increased humanitarian suffering, frustration and hopelessness, threatening to completely destabilize the situation.

Despite the rising tensions and risks, Israel is systematically committing these crimes as a matter of policy. It does so in defiance of world opinion and in blatant contempt for international law, including the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, to which the State of Palestine has acceded and will soon become a State party. Unquestionably, the lack of accountability has fostered this Israeli impunity, regarding which it is high time for the international community to confront as a matter of legal, political and moral responsibility, with full knowledge that such illegal actions have obstructed and continue to obstruct the achievement of a peaceful settlement of the conflict.

In the recent period, the Israeli Government has moved forward on decisions to expand several settlements in the West Bank through various deceitful and illegal measures. This includes the issuance of military orders for the confiscation of thousands of dunums of Palestinian land by declaring them as so-called "State lands" and declaring other areas as so-called "closed military zones". Throughout nearly half a century of this belligerent military occupation, all such measures have

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served one Israeli agenda: to forcibly displace the Palestinian population and colonize and de facto annex massive areas of Palestinian land, in grave breach of international law and in contradiction to the two-State solution on the pre-1967 borders.

During the current week, on 9 February, Israel issued a military order declaring large areas of land extending from Occupied East Jerusalem to Bethlehem, to Al-Khalil to the Dead Sea as "closed military zones". In this regard, it is relevant to note that the Palestinian Government had previously declared its intentions to create a nature reserve and build an airport in this area of Palestine. Moreover, it should be noted that approximately 18 per cent of the West Bank has been designated as a "closed military zone for training" by Israel, affecting at least 38 Palestinian communities and thousands of Palestinian civilians.

At the same time, Israel continues unabated with settlement activities in Occupied East Jerusalem, aggressively targeting the city with this illegal campaign. In the recent period, this has involved the advancement of plans for the construction of thousands of units under the guise of "tourism" and "building hotel rooms" in several distinctly Palestinian neighbourhoods of the city, including in Jabal Al-Mukaber, Sheikh Jarrah, Beit Safafa and Wadi Al-Joz.

All such plans are clearly aimed at entrenching Israel's illegitimate control of the area with the establishment of more "facts on the ground" further linking the illegal settlements and further isolating Occupied East Jerusalem. This involves ongoing attempts by the occupying Power to implement the so-called "E1" plan, including various schemes and repeated attempts to forcibly displace thousands of Palestinian Bedouin families in that area. We once again draw the attention of the international community to this issue, underscoring the threats of such Israeli actions to the contiguity of the State of Palestine, including East Jerusalem. In this regard, Palestinian civilian protests against these actions continue to be met with aggression, with the Israeli occupying forces destroying, for the fifth time during the current week, the "Bawabat Al-Quds" (Jerusalem gateway) protest village near Abu Dis, tearing it down with bulldozers and confiscating property, including the personal belongings of the protesters.

Further, in blatant connection with its illegal settlement campaign, Israel, the occupying Power, continues to demolish Palestinian homes and properties in direct breach of the clear prohibitions in international humanitarian law. In this regard, we must draw attention to the recent order issued by the Israeli Prime Minister for the demolition of 400 Palestinian structures in so-called "Area C" of the West Bank, the majority of which have been built with European Union funding support for schools and homes and economic development in the area. Also, on 27 January, an Israeli court issued an order for the confiscation of hundreds of dunums of Palestinian land in the village of Beit Ula, north-west of Al-Khalil. In addition, the Israeli occupying forces have posted notices for the confiscation of another 2,000 dunums of private Palestinian land in the village of Shuyukh, north-east of Al-Khalil.

These deliberate, illegal and systematic Israeli actions are seriously undermining the Palestinian presence and viability of Palestinian communities in the area. In the month of January 2015 alone, Israeli demolitions in "Area C" resulted in the destruction of 86 structures, including homes, water pipelines, cisterns and tanks, agricultural vehicles and fences, and the displacement of 117 people, including children. Such arbitrary and wanton destruction, which is clearly aimed at causing misery and making life unbearable for the Palestinian

civilian population, constitutes a breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention and violates numerous human rights, including the right to property, to adequate housing, to livelihood, to education and to development.

Of course, the occupying Power also continues apace with its demolitions in Occupied East Jerusalem. On 9 February, the Israeli occupying forces demolished a Palestinian home, again in the Silwan neighbourhood, which has been heavily targeted by such destruction. The demolition rendered 14 members of the family of Ahmad Mahmoud Al-Abbasi homeless, and the family was even prevented from removing its belongings from the home before it was demolished.

In this regard, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat documented that, in 2014, at least 590 Palestinian-owned structures in "Area C" and Occupied East Jerusalem had been destroyed by Israel. This resulted in the forced displacement of 1,177 Palestinians, the highest number since the Office began monitoring the displacement of the civilian population under Israeli occupation in 2008.

Regrettably, while the international community has long recognized the illegality of all of these Israeli actions, has repeatedly condemned them and called for their cessation, the failure to enact consequences for Israeli violations and contempt has led to a situation of total impunity that has made more and more implausible the achievement of the two-State solution, despite the firm Palestinian and global commitment to this solution.

Salvaging the two-State solution and averting the further destabilization of this volatile situation require immediate action by the international community. Measures must be undertaken to compel Israel, the occupying Power, to cease all such violations and crimes and to abide by obligations under international law or to be fully held accountable should it fail to do so. This includes responsible action by the Security Council, which is long overdue, both to ensure respect of international law and to contribute seriously to the achievement of a final, just, lasting and peaceful solution to this conflict, as well as actions by Governments, parliaments and civil society to uphold international law and to compel compliance, including with regard to all manifestations of Israeli settlement activities in the Occupied State of Palestine, including East Jerusalem.

The present letter is in follow-up to our 536 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the State of Palestine. Those letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 2 February 2015 (A/ES-10/672-S/2015/81) constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed against the Palestinian people. Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations